

BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

This Month's Issue:

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Finding the Right Balance During the Holidays

The holiday season can often bring unwelcome guests: stress and anxiety. And it's no wonder. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands: parties, shopping, cooking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few. Add family dynamics to the list and you have the perfect recipe for feeling overwhelmed!

With some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.

Don't strive for the "perfect family" holiday

Many of us cling to the image of the ideal holiday season where everyone is relentlessly cheerful; smiling and laughing with no cares in the world! However, perfection is impossible, so we may become disappointed and stressed if things go awry. Instead, have realistic, non-ambitious expectations—and take one day at a time. Make a list and check it twice. Instead of gifts write down the priorities that you have for the holiday season.

Create new traditions

If the same old family holiday rituals have become too much for you, try celebrating in new ways. Start early now and talk with the family about making new traditions this year, i.e. "Why don't we do a potluck this year instead of expecting mom to cook for all of us?" Or, "Let's take a trip for Christmas instead of buy a lot of gifts that we do not need."

Acknowledge and share your feelings

If you've lost someone close to you this year, don't try to put on a brave face just for the holidays. Express your grief and sadness to those you trust. Seek out your EAP if you need to talk to someone about overcoming the feelings of grief and loss.

Unplug and make an effort to enjoy the holidays

Make an effort to unwind by yourself for short periods of relaxation between holiday tasks or events. This can help you unplug and stay on a healthy track. Even little things like watching your favorite TV show or enjoying a cup of coffee by the Christmas tree can help you embrace the holidays.

Eating Healthy While Traveling

Some healthy snacks you can bring are:

- ▶ Whole grain crackers, high fiber cereal, fig bars, granola mix, nuts, and dried fruit
- ▶ If you can pack a cooler try cheese sticks, yogurt, hard boiled eggs, or lean meats
- ▶ Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water
- ▶ Remember to eat breakfast

Eating Out Tips to Try:

- ▶ Order a half portion & share
- ▶ Choose baked instead of fried foods
- ▶ Order your salad with the dressing on the side
- ▶ Skip the mayo & calorie dense sauces
- ▶ Have a side salad instead of the bread or a basket of chips

Choose fruit!

Bananas are loaded with energizing potassium & snacking on one can banish tiredness for up to 2 hours. Extra energy is always helpful!

Want a Good Night's Sleep?

- Consume less (or no) caffeine
- Reduce screen time
- Avoid alcohol
- Drink less fluids before going to bed
- Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime
- Avoid nicotine
- Exercise regularly
- Try a relaxing routine
- Establish a regular bedtime and wake schedule (even on weekends and off days)

Exercise on the Road

Trying to get a workout while traveling for the holidays? Plenty of exercises require little-to-no equipment at all. Do pushups to work your upper body, your core and get your heart rate elevated. Squats and lunges are a perfect workout for your legs.

You can tone your triceps by doing dips from a chair (keep your feet flat on the floor). Jumping rope or jogging in place will get your blood flowing and your heart pumping. Don't let travel impede your fitness routine!

How to Survive a Cold

Protect yourself. Wash your hands, use hand sanitizer & avoid touching your face.



Soothe your symptoms. Tell your pharmacist about your symptoms and let them help you choose an appropriate over-the-counter medicine.

For body aches and fever take acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Remember to drink plenty of fluids (no alcohol).

Call your doctor if your symptoms last longer than usual, you have a fever of 101 for 2 days, you are experiencing severe ear pain, trouble breathing or difficulty swallowing. Finally, rest and drink plenty of fluids if you are sick.

MANAGE HOLIDAY SPENDING

Pre-Holiday Planning is the Key

Want to save a little money on the holidays?



The best tips are the old standbys: Start early, stock up and be flexible. But don't be afraid to brainstorm a few low-cost alternatives to some of your pricier holiday habits. Want to enjoy a festive old time without the lingering January debt?



Draft a spending plan

The kids probably don't even know what they'll be asking Santa for yet. But you probably know about how much you want to spend for the holidays. So this is the time to strategize -- before the music, ads and crowds cloud your thinking. Make a list of family members and corresponding gifts by each person. Once that's been done, include any holiday spending for the home, such as decorations and supplies for holiday entertaining. Don't forget the Christmas cards and stamps!

Once you've created a budget or spending plan, stick to it. If unexpected expenses arise, make a plan to pay those off before the bills arrive.

Brainstorm fun, low-stress gift exchanges

Exchanging gifts with extended family and friends doesn't automatically mean burning through cash or spending hours shopping. In November, you have time to talk and plan something fun and inexpensive. Ideas like a photo exchange in a homemade frame or a recipe book of family recipes are a nice way to celebrate the holidays. Keep crafting to a minimum though. Stick with things you've done before, and keep the list of recipients to those who would truly appreciate your work.

Get your home -- or reservations -- ready

Need a new tablecloth or some new dinnerware for that Christmas dinner? Or maybe you just want to repaint the dining room? Now's the time to plan for those expenditures. Ditto if you need to rent anything for your holiday feast, such as extra chairs.

Helping your Employees Manage Holiday Stress

According to the greeting cards and television commercials, the holiday season should be nothing but merry, jolly, happy fun. But as anyone who has juggled a job, family responsibilities and other seasonal obligations surely knows, the reality isn't always quite that simple.

Although the holidays are a wonderful time of year, they often entail a hustle and bustle that can really pile on the stress. For many in the human resources and benefits field, the holidays are the culmination of one of the busiest periods of the year. Add to that financial worries, scheduling concerns, gift shopping, off-the-clock parties and entertaining – and before too long, the stress and anxiety can start to overwhelm the seasonal glee and fellow-feeling. Here are a few tips to help your employees enjoy the holiday season while juggling work:

Start scheduling well in advance. Don't let this peak period sneak up on you! Make sure you begin the planning and scheduling process as soon as November 1 – or even earlier. Ask team members to provide their leave requests and seasonal schedules as soon as they can.

Make your expectations clear. In the interest of fairness, it's usually a good idea to establish a seasonal scheduling policy that sets forth the minimum hours that you will expect from each team member during the season.



However, since many employees will be traveling or housing guests, do your best to accommodate reasonable requests for changes.

Don't forget to have fun. Sure, the holiday season can be stressful, both on and off the clock. But try to set aside some time each day to celebrate the diverse values and traditions that make this time of year special. Small gestures like seasonal treats, holiday-themed contests and games and special prizes can help defuse some of the tension that your super-busy staff is likely to be shouldering.

Implementing a few simple techniques geared toward alleviating your team's holiday stress is a win-win solution – you'll help your employees enjoy the season, you'll ensure that their performance won't be adversely impacted during a key busy period, and your organization will embody the ethos of care and generosity that defines the holiday spirit.

Ho Ho Ho...Happy Holidays!

Sweet Potato Gratin

Ingredients:

- ▶ 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ▶ 1 cup fresh whole-wheat breadcrumbs
- ▶ 1/4 cup chopped pecan halves
- ▶ 4 garlic cloves, minced and divided
- ▶ Cooking spray
- ▶ 1 1/2 lbs peeled sweet potatoes, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- ▶ 2 pounds peeled Russet potatoes, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- ▶ 1 1/4 cups half-and-half
- ▶ 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- ▶ 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves

Number of Servings: 8

Nutrition Information Per Serving:

Calories: 260; Fat: 8g; Carbs: 43g; Protein: 6g

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 425°. Heat oil in a medium nonstick skillet over medium-high heat; add breadcrumbs, pecans, and half of garlic. Cook mixture until crumbs are golden (about 5 minutes), stirring well. Remove from heat; set aside. Coat an 8 x 8 baking dish with cooking spray; arrange potato slices in

dish, alternating between sweet and Russet. Combine half-and-half and next 5 ingredients (through thyme) in a small bowl. Stir in remaining half of garlic; whisk well. Pour half-and-half mixture over potatoes in dish. Cover dish tightly with foil; bake in middle of oven 45 minutes to 1 hour or until potatoes are tender.

Remove foil; discard. Sprinkle breadcrumb mixture evenly over potatoes; return to oven. Bake until crumbs are crispy, liquid is bubbling and reduced, and potatoes are tender (about 8 minutes). Let stand at least 15 minutes; serve.